23: Franck--308 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 301, 751

"This cord decoration is something peculiar to Luang Prabang. The commissaire wore them also, as did his baby son; possibly his charming lady did too, though I am not sure that mere women are worthy of them. Cords are put about the wrists amid elaborate ceremonies and must be worn for at least seven days if they are to be effective in preserving the wearer from evil. The king himself had come to tie those about the wrists of the commissaire's newly born son and heir and thereby assure it constant good luck through all the menaces to health among European infants living in the tropics."

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262 It is thus that the Missionaries, for example, whose resources are extremely limited and do not enable them to use imported foodstuffs, remain in the land for many long years without any great damage to their health. It goes without saying that one should avoid overindulgence in food, and especially in alcoholic beverages. Drinking iced tea at and between meals gives excellent results, but then it is well to take a small quantity of pure wine. Coffee is an indispensable tonic and stimulant for aiding digestion and fighting off the heaviness which generally manifests itself after meals.

000 One should avoid long siestas immediately after the noonday meal. Newcomers will do well not to succomb to this damaging habit, which slows digestion, softens the organism and in the long run robs the brain of its lucidity and vigor. It is preferable to move about a bit immediately after meals on the verandas or in the rooms of the house. Billiards provide excellent exercise in this case.

Around two o'clock, when digestion is complete and before business is resumed, a cold shower is extremely hygienic. [120] According to one's tastes and temperament one may take a shower bath, pour water over oneself with the help of a basin held in the hand, or bathe in a tub with a large sponge.

In the evening after sunset it is well to take a little exercise in the form of horseback riding, bicycling, tennis, etc. But one should avoid going too far and becoming tired, since all that is needed is enough effort to maintain the suppleness and elasticity of the muscles. After such exercise one should take a quick shower or tub bath, then, if desired, a small glass of generous or tonic wine such as quinquina, cola, coca, Désiles wine, etc.

One should avoid all the so-called alcoholic aperitifs, which necessitate the use of a great deal of water and ice, for they cause overabundant perspiration and, by filling the stomach, retard the secretion of the gastric juices. It is precisely this secretion which gives the sensation of appetite.

164 In the matter of general preventive hygiene, a great many persons will do well to follow the regimen outlined below. Every • 757 day one should take a few centigrams of salts of quinine, hydrobromide, bihydrobromide, sulfate, etc. If excessive fatigue is anticipated as a consequence of prolonged exposure to the sun, a long march or a stay in the forest, one should take a larger dose of quinine. The dose may be as large, depending on temperament and experience, as one gram for the sulphate and fifty centigrams for the hydrobromide.

This preventive measure is recommended by Laveran, who discovered the haematozoon of paludism, and is followed by a great many persons. It has always yielded excellent results, even among the natives who are also subject to the fever (1).

(1) According to a report by the Superior Resident in Laos, in which mention is made of a note by M. Morin, the government commissioner in Vien-Tiane, there is a kind of liana in this province which is quite common in the region and which the Laotians call Khua-Khao-hô.

This liana, which the Siamese call Bora-phet, is no other, according to the dictionary by Pallegoix, than the Cocculus verrucosus of the Menispermaceae family.

The taste of the sap which it contains, when newly cut, is particularly bitter. When dried the liana itself retains a very pronounced taste of quinine.

Native doctors use it in various preparations for treating obstinate fevers and jaundice in its various forms.

At the same time as the Khao-hô, pieces of heartwood from two hardwood trees are generally used. We have been unable to discover their exact names, but the active medicinal agent, according to the natives, is primarily Cocculus verrucosus. (Bulletin économique de l'Indo-Chine, August 1, 1900).

[121] The daily ingestion of a small quantity of quinine keeps the blood in a toxic state for fever-bearing microbes, and it must be constantly saturated if one wishes to prevent their invasion and growth.

Some persons also get along very well on a treatment which consists in taking a purgation of sodium or magnesium sulphate, or else an emetic of ipecacuanha, every three months (April, July, October and January).

Whenever a feeling of torpor, stiffness in the nape of the neck or the shivers which are the forerunners of fever manifest themselves, one and a half to two grams of ipeca and one gram of quinine, after vomiting has stopped, will overcome the illness and reduce the attack to its most benign form.

In sum, one can keep in excellent health in Laos, by following these few recommendations, if one has a good stomach, solid insides and an intact liver. A stay in this country can therefore not be

149: Reinach--139 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

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Houses are generally situated in the middle of an enclosure which serves as a garden, and where coconut palms, betel palms and other fruit trees are planted.

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Use of tobacco and betel. The Laotians use tobacco, which they grow and prepare quite skilfully, in the form of conical cigarettes which are rolled in dried banana leaves. They also mix it with their betel quids. Everybody smokes--men, women and children. It is not unusual to see children four years old, completely naked, puffing clouds of smoke from a cigarette which is enormous in comparison to their little fingers.

Like a great many other peoples of Asia, Laotians chew "betel." As we know this type of quid is composed of a leaf of "piper betel" which is smeared with slaked lime and on which is placed tobacco, a piece of betel nut or some "sisiet" bark (or [185] the extract from this bark, called catechu). It is then rolled and placed in the mouth between the cheek and the gums.

Chewing betel causes abundant salivation, blood red in color, which makes quite an impression at first sight but to which one gradually becomes accustomed.

It is claimed that chewing betel is not a mere habit, but that it has several useful effects on the organism. It is supposed to keep one from being thirsty and to be an astringent and tonic, somewhat like cola or coca.

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Teeth lacquer. So as to preserve the enamel of their teeth from the corrosive action of the lime and from other acidulous elements contained in the betel nut, the Laotians have the custom of lacquering their teeth black. To accomplish this they rub them with the sap of certain hardwood trees, which they obtain through partial combustion of the wood and condensation of the smoke on an iron spatula. A kind of sticky black coating is thereby produced, which dries rapidly and is made to adhere to the teeth by means of alum.

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Opium. The use of opium is quite widespread in Laos, and unfortunately its effects do not help to diminish the natural apathy of the race.

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Tattoos. It is customary for men to be tattooed from beneath the knee to the upper part of the thigh. For this reason the Laotians of the left bank of the Mékong are called "white bellies" in opposition to the Youns of the other bank, whose tattoos cover the stomach and abdomen and who are known as "black bellies." The tattoos are

149: Reinach--142 G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
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"When a woman feels her first pains she abstains from taking baths and swallows quantities of salt and spiced drinks. She summo a midwife and fastens a cotton thread from the bonzery around the latter's wrists. This precaution might be called the 'sanctification of hands.'

"The midwife comes to stay in the house of her client until after delivery. She is given the choicest food and commands the utmost respect. She may wash her hands only with water which has been perfumed (by means of a variety of mint). Finally, when labor pains begin, the woman sits down with her legs folded and spread wide apart. Her underskirt must be pulled down over her legs and taken in sharply at the waist by a belt. This last precaution is taken so that during the mother's efforts to deliver the child it will not go upwards towards her thorax. The midwife remains in front of the parturient woman, while relatives, friends or, more often, young men hold the woman up and try to divert her with extremely licentious remarks. Some of the young men bring musical instruments, and others bring phalli to which they address such witty reproaches that the patient, despite her pain, responds with an outburst of laughter. There is gambling, drinking and singing, and during all this time the work goes on and the woman gives birth in the midst of the gaiety.

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"No one sees the actual delivery, not even relatives. Only the midwife passes her hands under the skirt and watches attentively so as to intervene if necessary. The child is taken from the mother on a mat, the midwife draws it gently towards her and makes ready to cut the umbilical cord. The latter is cut between two ligatures made with cotton threads, and the actual section made on a weaver's shuttle with a knife which may be more or less ornate depending on the state of the family's fortune (2). The foetal part (about eight

(2) In northern Laos the cord is cut on a cylinder of green bamboo, closed at one end by a joint. The knife is a strip of bamboo cut at a sharp angle so that the siliceous bark forms the cutting edge. All iron or steel instruments are strictly forbidden. (Author's note.)

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centimeters in length) is rolled in leaves of an astringent variety and folded back on the abdomen. The child is then rubbed with slightly spiced oil.

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wax candles decorated with flowers, cigarettes and a sum of money. (Author's note)

the family from the hands of her patient.

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"Two or three days after her confinement ends the mother must go to the pagoda and give a few presents to the bonzes, who give her in return a few cotton threads which she fastens to her wrists " (4).

(4) Dr. Estrade, 1895. Dictionnaire et Guide franco-laotien. [113]

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Cases of dystocia and other childbearing difficulties are very rare in Laos, thanks to the physiological law which decrees that childbirth shall occur all the more naturally insofar as one comes closer to the primitive type and as one's body has not been deformed either by certain professional attitudes or by artifices of dress. [191] But when any difficulty of this type does occur the Laotian midwives are extremely skilful. Their hands take the place of the steel instruments in our gynecological and surgical arsenal, and their results are usually successful both for mother and child.

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When the newly delivered mother is allowed to get up there occur traditional feasts and celebrations, the brilliance of which varies with the status of the young mother's parents. It is generally during these happy gatherings that the bonzes or sorcerers choose the name which the newborn child is to bear. They usually base their choice on some peculiarity of the coloring or eyes, or on a phase of the moon. The name will be replaced by another if the child falls sick, for in this case, as they say, the old name was unpleasing to his "This," that is to say to his personal tutelary spirits.

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Infanticide. Scarcely any cases of infanticide can be cited in Laos, and abortions are extremely rare or at least very well hidden. For when cases do occur it is among members of a class which, because of the rank it holds, is anxious to conceal its faults from the mass of the people.

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In popular belief abortion, whether voluntary or natural, is regarded as a punishment of heaven or as a case of aberration which cannot fail to draw down the utmost scorn on the guilty parties and their accomplices.

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Marriage. Marriage in Laos is made ready for long in advance, thanks to the liberty which young people of both sexes enjoy. The latter meet one another at every celebration and can communicate

But that is another story...

The belief in the phi and an excessive credulity results in Laotians being often the victims of charlatans who are severely punished by the Laotian code. Luck-bringing amulets are also very widespread. But this belief in the inhabitants of the invisible world is most apparent in childbirth and in profane ceremonies.

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RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS

The Calendar

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The Laotian calendar belongs to the lunar-solar system. Its elements are borrowed principally from the Indian calendar. As in all the other countries of Indochina the Laotians use the cycle of the 12 animals (Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Serpent, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Cock, Dog, Pig).

The era most commonly used in Laos is that of Cullasakaraj (little era) beginning in A. D. 638, the next most used is the Buddhasakaraj (Buddhist era beginning in 544 B. C.). Finally the Mahasakaraj (great era) is found in ancient inscriptions. At the present time only the Christian era is used officially.

The months.

The Laotian months are alternately of 20 and 30 days. Sometimes their Indian name is used, but most often their number is used. Their names are as follows:

No.	Laotian	Pali	
1.	deuan Tieng	Magasira	December-January
2.	- Gni	Phussa	January-February
3.	- Sam	Magha	February-March
4.	- Si	Phagguna	March-April
5.	- Ha	Citta	April-May
6.	- Hoc	Visakha	May-June
7.	- Chet	Jettha	June-July
8.	- Pet	Asadha	July-August
9.	- Kao	Savana	August-September
10.	- Sip	Potthapada	September-October
11.	- Sip Et	Assayuja	October-November
12.	- Sip Song	Kattika	November-December

764 coffin is placed on a truck. The bonzes are at the head of the procession, then the widow and the children dressed in white as a sign of mourning.

[60] The coffin is placed on the pyre. All those attending, holding a lighted candle or resinous torch, go to the pyre in single file, and throw the brands into the fire. It is forbidden to light a torch by lending one's light or by borrowing that of a neighbor. During this time the family must throw offerings to the crowd: pieces of banana branches, lemons, etc., into which have been introduced coins mixed with grilled rice. The cotton thread, called fay mongkhou, which [751] had surrounded the house in order to chase away sorrow, illness, the phi, etc., is removed at the end of the ceremony.

[187] [775] On the third day the bones are fetched away. The bonzes are invited, but before touching the ashes, they must be examined to see if they have left any imprints either animal or human, in order to know in what form the dead man will be reborn. The bones are gathered with wooden pincers and then placed in an urn. A statue in a vaguely human form is erected of wet cinders. The urn and the offerings are surrounded by a cotton thread, then the bonzes recite a prayer and this closes the ceremony. The urn will be placed in a pagoda or buried by the family who will erect a that. A little later, to commemorate the death of the departed, the family will dig a hole in the pagoda or near the that and in it plant a long bamboo at the end of which is fastened a cotton banner laminated with small bamboo sticks. A tray of offerings is brought, which had been placed at the foot of the bamboo pole while it was being set up, and which is held by the relatives and friends of the dead man. Before this, offerings of food had been wrapped in a banana leaf. Once the bamboo is set up, water is poured all around on the earth which is holding it up, in the hope that the merits of this action will reach the other world. Then the whole family [61] squats down around the pole and with joined hands recites prayers.

The Laotian House.

342 It is built on piles and has a veranda. The roof is curved slightly inwards. A long stake holding the water jar is sunk in the ground near the veranda outside the house. The floor is of bamboo or of thin wide boards. The wall and ceiling are of bamboo panels, or of boards, or of mud. There are two principal doors and few windows. A partition going from the inner beam of the front gable separates the house lengthwise in two parts, most often of equal size. One is divided into

342 bedrooms separated from each other by partitions or curtains, the
[178] other is the communal room. In the space between the inner and outer beam, and not limited by the longitudinal partition, is the altar on which there are always one or several buddhas. It is placed on the side of the bedrooms, on the "soung" side of the dwelling, that is on the side opposite the entrance. The dimensions of the dwellings vary between six and twenty-four meters long by four to nine meters wide.

342 The houses are most often open to the east or to the north. They
823 may also overlook what is passing by in the streets or the paths and, as the case may be, the whole length of the river. For there is a superstition which forbids building "across the current," which is considered as unconquerable and invincible, and it would be dangerous to defy it.

343 The outhouses consist of an adjoining kitchen and a granary, a
[252] few meters removed from the principal dwelling. Near this granary is found the picturesque rice pestle (khok khao) which the women work with their feet.

343 [62] All the villagers participate in building the house. When the
476 propitious day and moment have been determined, the owner feeds everybody the whole time the house is being built.

Tattooing

301 Every self-respecting Laotian must be tattooed. The absence of
885 tattooing is a sign of mental and moral, therefore of social, inferiority.
562 As a general rule, however, the Laotian woman is not tattooed. This custom is found only among the women of Youan, Kha or Lu.

301 The Laotian is tattooed chiefly on his thighs, forearms and chest. The tattooing on the thighs is so close together that from a distance a tattooed man looks as if he were wearing close-fitting blue shorts. The Laotians are called "white bellies" as opposed to those who are tattooed down to the navel and are then called black bellies. The colors used for tattooing are indigo blue, red, and black made from a mixture of lampblack diluted with buffalo gall.

[751] Those who have been tattooed are convinced that the signs they wear give them certain supernatural powers, particularly making them invulnerable to bullets and snake bites. During the events of 1941 Siamese soldiers were found wearing white cotton vests covered with cabalistic signs closely related to tattooing. These are a kind of removable tattooing intended to protect those who are wearing them.

301 The use of these magic shirts is also known in Cambodia. The designs
262 usually consist of flowers, geometric figures, tools, flowers, vegetable
751 branches, and of animals. Sometimes pictures drawn from Buddhist iconography can be recognized.

[174] Apparently the origin of tattooing is to be found in totemism. By
301 analyzing the Laotian tattooing designs, [63] it has been possible to recognize traces of sun worship, as well as the mythological role of the dog. But at the present time Laotians seem only to value tattooing as an artistic ornament.

The Divining Rod.

787 Among the curios which the tourist looks for in Laos, the most
823 easily found is a carved bamboo cane. Immediately below the head,
825 which is often of chased silver, there is a sort of checkered diagram made up of twenty-five little squares. Below this divining diagram are found, in succession from top to bottom, a zebu, a horse, a rakshasha or ogre, a tiger, a buffalo, a deer, an elephant. These animals correspond respectively to the days of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

It should be noted that, except for the buffalo and the deer, the others are the symbolical animals of the zodiac and correspond to the different cardinal points.

The Laotians consult these figures at different actions of their lives: choice of a wedding day, the hour for burial, etc. The diagram is used to calculate the hour, and the animals indicate the cardinal point which should be followed.

This cane is also found among the Man.

[64] THE NEW YEAR AND THE FEASTS OF THE FIFTH MONTH

527 The Laotian New Year always takes place between the 6th day
805 of the crescent moon of the 5th month and the 5th day of the crescent moon of the 6th month. The very core of the feast includes three days: the last day of the past year, the intermediate day and the New Year's day, properly so-called. The most picturesque ceremonies are those of Luang Prabang, for there tradition has been best preserved.

527 The programme of the feasts begins with a procession of royal elephants. Their heads ornamented with red and black painted designs, their drivers dressed in red tunics with yellow lapels, on their backs, the fifteen elephants go to the pagodas of Xieng Tong, Vat

173: Deydier--61 H, B-3 (no date) 1952 (ca. 1940) AM1 Indochina Laotians AM8

Fig. IV. The Rasi. Attaching the cotton threads to the wrist of the host (phouk Khene) (Cl. Service Presse Information).